



The Lakeland

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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Lossiranta Lodge (p148)
- ➔ Mannila (p151)
- ➔ Valamo monastery (p155)
- ➔ Hotel Yöpuu (p157)
- ➔ Oravi Outdoor Centre (p152)

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Musta Lammas (p164)
- ➔ Pöllöwaari (p159)
- ➔ Huvila (p149)
- ➔ Figaro (p157)
- ➔ Kummisetä (p164)

Why Go?

Most of Finland could be dubbed lakeland, but around here it seems there's more water than terra firma. And what water: sublime, sparkling and clean. Reflecting sky and forests as clearly as a mirror, it leaves an indelible impression.

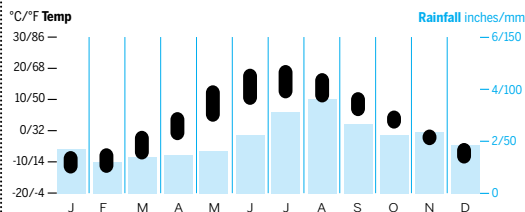
Get outdoors here, whether you rent a cottage and try your hand at kindling the perfect blaze in the sauna stove, grab a canoe and paddle the family-friendly Squirrel Route or go in search of rare freshwater seals.

Towns, too, have much to offer. Savonlinna hosts opera in the wonderful setting of its island castle. Jyväskylä's lively feel and architectural portfolio have obvious appeal, while Kuopio offers lake trips and a great smoke sauna.

Lakeland's people – the *savolaiset* – are among the most outspoken and friendly of Finns. They are often lampooned due to their distinctive Savo dialect, accent and humour. But they have the last laugh thanks to the unparalleled beauty of their region.

When to Go

The Lakeland



Feb Check out the ice sculptures in Savonlinna, and explore Lin-nansaari National Park on skates.

Jul Great weather for water activities, and the best festivals, including opera in Savonlinna's castle.

Aug See all the highlights in decent weather but without the July crowds.



The Lakeland Highlights

1 Soaring on the wing of an aria in the memorable castle setting of the **Savonlinna Opera Festival** (p147)

2 Paddling around the **Linnansaari and Kolovesi National Parks** (p152) seeking a glimpse of the rare Saimaa ringed seal

3 Peering at the visionary buildings of **Alvar Aalto** (p156) in the lively university town of Jyväskylä

4 Sweating it out in Kuopio's sociable **smoke sauna** (p161)

5 Relaxing in a cottage by one of the region's thousands of lakes, including

its largest, **Lake Saimaa** (p152)

6 Cruising the picturesque lakeland en route to a visit to the Orthodox monastery at **Valamo** (p155)

7 Entering a fantasy land at the seriously offbeat **mechanical music museum** (p154) in Varkaus

Savonlinna

☎ 015 / POP 27,420

One of Finland's prettiest towns, Savonlinna shimmers on a sunny day as the water ripples around its centre. Set on islands between Haapavesi and Pihlajavesi lakes, it's a classic Lakeland settlement with a major attraction: perched on a rocky islet

is one of Europe's most visually dramatic castles, Olavinlinna. The castle hosts July's world-famous opera festival in a spectacular setting.

Even if you're no ariaholic, the buzz of the festival makes this the most rewarding time to visit, with more restaurants and cafes open and animated post-show debriefs over dinner or bubbly going deep into the darkless night.